

official instructions, may be disqualified for future service or employment by the State committee. Before any such disqualification determination is made, the State committee shall undertake such investigation as it deems necessary, after which the State committee shall give the affected person a written statement of the determination for the proposed disqualification action. Such person shall have 15 days from the date of receipt of such determination to advise in writing, in person or both, why the action should not be taken. If any further investigation develops substantial additional reasons for disqualification, the person involved shall be given a written statement of such reasons and 15 days from the date of mailing in which to respond. The State committee may remove the disqualification for future service or employment only with prior approval of the Deputy Administrator.

(d) Any county committee member, community committee member, delegate to the local administrative area convention or the county convention, or any alternate to any such office, county executive director, or any other county employee, who, prior to taking such persons's present office: Committed, or attempted or conspired to commit fraud; or impeded the effectiveness of any program administered in the county, may be suspended. Any such person who is under formal investigation for any reason set forth in this section may be suspended. The proceedings under this paragraph shall be applied the same as provided in paragraph (a) of this section.

(e) If in the event of suspensions or vacancies there are less than two members, including alternates, available to serve on the county committee, the State committee shall designate a person to administer the programs in the county pending the exoneration or removal of those persons under investigation and, if removed, pending the election of new county committee members and alternates. Such person may be the remaining member or alternate member of the committee if available. Any person named by the State committee to serve in such capacity shall have full authority to perform all du-

ties regularly performed by a duly elected county committee.

§ 7.29 Delegation of authority to Deputy Administrator.

Notwithstanding the authority vested by this part in a State committee, a county committee, and the county executive director, the Deputy Administrator shall have authority to suspend and/or remove or disqualify for future service or employment, any county committee member, community committee member, delegate to the local administrative area convention or the county convention, an alternate to any such office, county executive director, or other county employee, for any and all of the reasons and causes authorizing such suspension, removal, and disqualification by the State committee, the county committee, or the county executive director. Any person suspended, removed or disqualified pursuant to this section shall be given a written statement of the reason for such action and shall be advised of the right of review as provided in § 7.30 of this part.

§ 7.30 Right of review.

Any person dissatisfied with a determination of the county committee or county executive director may appeal in writing or in person or both, such determination to the State committee. Any person dissatisfied with a determination of the State committee may appeal such determination in writing to the Deputy Administrator. Any person dissatisfied with the determination of the Deputy Administrator made under § 7.29 of this part may request a reconsideration of such determination by the Deputy Administrator. Any such appeal or request for reconsideration shall be made within 15 days from the date of the mailing of the determination with respect to which the appeal or request is filed. Except as provided in § 7.31 of this part, such appeals and requests for reconsideration shall be determined on an informal basis. The person filing the appeal or request for reconsideration may present reasons, in writing or in person, or both, why the determination should be reversed or modified. Within

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60 days after the reasons have been presented, such person shall be notified of the determination on appeal or reconsideration. The notification shall clearly set forth the basis for the determination. The determination of the Deputy Administrator is final and not subject to further administrative review.

§ 7.31 Hearing in connection with appeals and requests for reconsideration to Deputy Administrator.

Any person (the "appellant") filing an appeal with the Deputy Administrator, or a request for reconsideration of a determination made by the Deputy Administrator under § 7.29 of this part, is entitled, at such person's election, to a hearing in connection therewith. If the appellant does not request a hearing, the appeal or reconsideration shall be handled in accordance with § 7.30 of this part. If the appellant desires a hearing, such person shall so advise the Deputy Administrator. The hearing shall be conducted by the Deputy Administrator, or a designee of the Deputy Administrator, who shall serve as a hearing officer. The hearing shall be held at the time and place designated by the hearing officer. The appellant may appear personally or through or accompanied by a representative. The hearing officer shall conduct the hearing so as to bring out pertinent facts, including the production of pertinent documents. Rules of evidence shall not be applied strictly, but the hearing officer shall exclude irrelevant or unduly repetitious evidence. Information having a bearing on the issues shall be received in evidence. Both the appellant and the agency representatives are entitled to produce witnesses and the appellant and agency representative shall be given an opportunity to cross-examine witnesses. The hearing officer shall inform the witnesses that they are subject to a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than 5 years, or both, for making any false statements (18 U.S.C. 1001). The hearing officer shall cause a transcript to be made of the hearing and it shall be made available to the appellant at actual costs.

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§ 7.32 Findings, analysis, and recommendations of hearing officer.

If the hearing has been conducted by a designee of the Deputy Administrator, the hearing officer shall, within 60 days from date of receipt of the transcript transmit to the Deputy Administrator:

- (a) The record of the hearing;
- (b) The findings and analysis of the hearing officer; and
- (c) A recommended determination.

§ 7.33 Determination of the Deputy Administrator.

Within 30 days after receipt of the findings, analysis, and recommendations of the hearing officer that are made under § 7.32 of this part, or within 60 days from the date of receipt of the transcript prepared under such section if the Deputy Administrator conducted the hearing, the Deputy Administrator shall make a final determination. The notification shall clearly set forth the basis for the determination. The determination of the Deputy Administrator is final and not subject to further administrative review.

§ 7.34 Custody and use of books, records, and documents.

(a) All books, records, and documents of or used by the county committee in the administration of programs assigned to it, or in the conduct of elections, shall be the property of the Commodity Credit Corporation or the United States Department of Agriculture, as applicable, and shall be maintained in good order in the county office.

(b) For polling and mail type elections, ballots shall remain in sealed boxes until the prescribed date for counting. Following the counting of ballots in all types of elections, the ballots shall be placed in sealed containers and retained for 30 days unless otherwise determined by the State committee.

(c) The books, records, and documents referred to in paragraph (a) shall be available for use and examination:

(1) At all times by authorized representatives of the Secretary; the Administrator, or a designee of the Administrator.